

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 3427

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF, SHUM, SU
SUBJECT: ERITREAN REFUGEES ENCOUNTER FLOOD AND MILITARY PROBLEMS

REF: KHARTOUM 3377

1. ETHIOPIAN ADVANCES IN ERITREA HAVE RESULTED IN CAPTURE OF ALL MAJOR TOWNS HELD BY ELF EXCEPT AGORDAT WHICH IS THREATENED, ACCORDING TO ERITREAN SOURCES IN KHARTOUM. AS RESULT, SOME 7,000 NEW REFUGEES HAVE ENTERED SUDAN IN LAST FEW DAYS. LOSS OF TESSENEI TO ETHIOPIANS HAS VUT MAJOR FOOD AND RELIEF SUPPLY ROUTE TO EPLF-HELD AREAS. REFUGEE AGENCIES IN SUDAN ARE DISTRACTED BY FLOOD PROBLEMS WHICH AFFECT REFUGEE RELIEF.

2. FOOD FOR ERITREANS HAS BEEN NORMALLY COLLECTED BY RELIEF AGENCIES AT PORT SUDAN AND SUAKIN ON SUDAN'S RED SEA COAST. IN DRY SEASON, FIFTEEN EPLF TRUCKS TOOK 12-TON CARGOES OF DHURA GRAIN FROM THESE PORTS TO TOKAR AND ONWARD TO STORAGE AT MARAFIT. FIVE TRUCKS BROUGHT DHURA FROM MARAFIT TO DISTRIBUTION AND STORAGE CENTERS IN ERITREA. EACH TRUCK MADE 15 TRIPS TO MARAFIT PER MONTH, MOVING 180 TONS EACH FOR TOTAL OF 2,700 TONS MONTHLY. "WASTE, LOSSES AND DAMAGE CAUSED BY TRANSPORT
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WERE ALMOST NON-EXISTENT," ACCORDING TO NORWEGIAN OBSERVER. MAJOR PROBLEM WAS GASOLINE SCARCITY. HOWEVER, IN MID-JULY ANNUAL FLOODS CLOSED DOWN TOKAR TO MARAFIT ROAD, AS EXPECTED, AND SINCE THEN EPLF HAS BEEN DRAWING DOWN SUPPLIES STORED AT MARAFIT. TRANSPORTATION INSIDE ERITREA, INCIDENTALLY, IS DONE BY NIGHT TO AVOID ETHIOPIAN AIR FORCE.

3. ALTERNATE ROUTE FOR EPLF OPENED IN JUNE AS RESULT UNITY AGREEMENT SIGNED ON MARCH 181 8, (#-4597. ?35233, 3)*
-,\$ EPLF, ALLOWING RELIEF SUPPLIES THROUGH GEDARIF AND KASSALA IN SUDAN AND THROUGH ELF-HELD TESSENEI EASTWARDS TO KEREN AND EPLF AREAS. TRUCK TIME TO KEREN WAS REDUCED BY 12 LAYS. TRUCK TRAILERS WERE ABLE TO OPERATE ON KASSALA- TESSENEI ROAD, ALMOST DOUBLING VOLUME OF FOOD MOVED AT CONSIDERABLE SAVINGS OF GASOLINE. NOW THIS ROUTE HAS BEEN LOST TO ETHIOPIAN MILITARY ACTION, ACCORDING TO REPORTS IN KHARTOUM.

4. INSIDE SUDAN, REFUGEE AGENCIES HAVE HAD DISTRIBUTION DIFFICULTIES (REFTEL) BEFORE RECENT INFLUX OF NEW REFUGEES. WORLD FOOD PROGRAM (WFP) IN SUDAN HAD 2,880 TONS OF DHURA STORED AT KHASHM EL GIRBA SOUTH OF KASSALA WHICH IT WAS TRUCKING ACROSS ATBARA RIVER DAM TO REFUGEE CAMPS IN GEDARIF AREA. ON JULY 28 WFP REPRESENTATIVES TOLD VICE PRESIDENT'S FOOD RELIEF COMMITTEE THAT 1,000 TONS OF THIS DHURA COULD BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR SUDANESE FLOOD VICTIMS AND STILL PROVIDE ENOUGH FOR ALL REFUGEES INCLUDING RECENTLY ARRIVED REFUGEES IF REFUGEE NEED DOES NOT GROW UNEXPECTEDLY. UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR) SAID TWO WEEKS AGO THAT THERE WERE 53,000 REFUGEES REGISTERED AT TURAL CAMPS IN SUDAN. TOTAL NOW IS UNCERTAIN BUT HAS GROWN BY 7,000 BORDER-CROSSERS AND UNKNOWN NUMBER OF REFUGEES INSIDE SUDAN WHO HAD NOT PREVIOUSLY ASKED FOR HELP.
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